

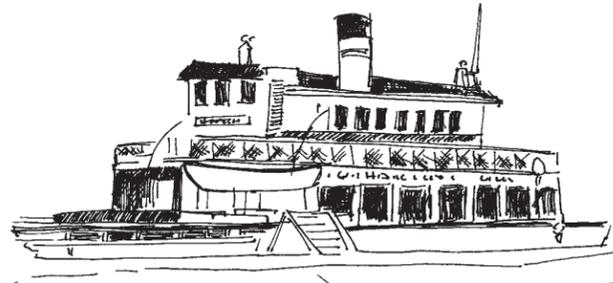
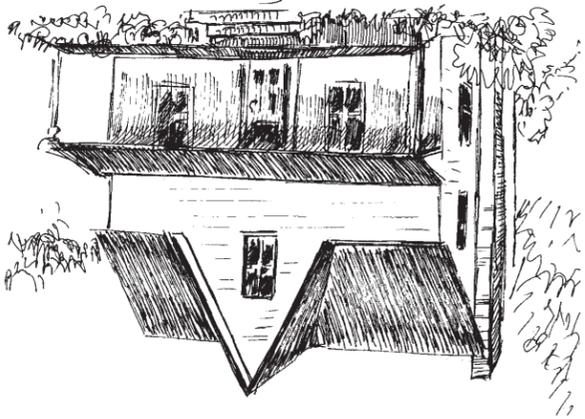
This brochure has been produced by the
Municipal Heritage Committee of
Leeds and the Thousand Islands
www.thousandislands.on.ca
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Rockport at one time was called Stonytown
which is not surprising considering the rugged
granite rock outcroppings all around you as
you walk through the village. (Cont)

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By the 1850s Rockport also had a cheese
factory that served the mainland farmer, but
also the many farms located on larger islands
in the river, such as Grenadier Island and Tar
Island. Many farmers rowed their milk pails
over to the cheese factory that was located on
the water in front of St. Brendan's Church.

An example of an early Ontario home with central
dormer and a spacious front porch to enjoy the bustle
of Rockport



The General Hancock ferry that operated
between Alexandria Bay and Rockport

Rockport by the 1880s was also becoming a
shipbuilding center. Robert and John
Carnegie, owners of the Rockport Navigation
Company, built the 300 passenger steamer
Island Queen as well as the Victoria,
Britannic, and the Mississquoi steamers. Then
in the twentieth century, Ed Andress and his
boatworks became famous for building St.
Lawrence skiffs and runabouts as well as
many early tour boats in the area.

Rockport had a ferry service that operated to
and from Alexandria Bay, New York. The
Hutcheson family from Alexandria Bay ran a
ferry as early as 1924 as motorcar traffic
increased in the area.. The General Hancock
and the Roosevelt ran back and forth for
many years but ceased to run soon after the
opening of the Ivy Lea International Bridge in
1938.

Today, Rockport is a busy place in the
summer with island residents and visitors
coming and going to the myriad of islands
around Rockport. Also, thousands of tourists
arrive by bus to go on a famous Thousand
Islands boat tour. But there are also those who
just want to come to Rockport to look out on
the river enjoy the beautiful view and imagine
how it was in Rockport's busy past....

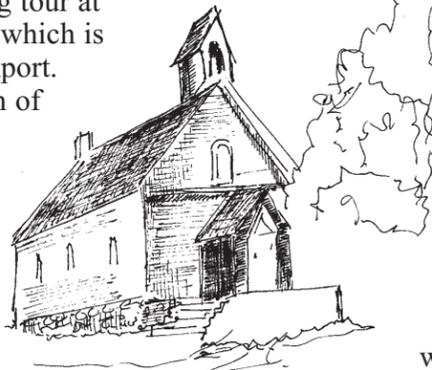
Eventually Rockport became an important
wood refuelling depot for steamers that, in
early years burned cordwood (4 foot logs) in
vast quantities. Nearby just west of Rockport,
Darlingside was also thriving as a trading post
and refuelling depot.
(See plaque on parkway west of Rockport).

Rockport was always an important stop on the
river for those preparing their canoes and
bateaux for the swift waters upriver (in the
narrow shallower, channels near the bridge)
And after descending this treacherous section,
Rockport was a good spot to rest and refresh.
An early log trading post was located in 1830s
here on the site of the Cornwall Store (today
the Boathouse Restaurant).
The first settlers were Loyalists refugees from
south of the border. Their land grants were
rocky and hard to farm and so many turned to
selling off timber from their land. Large pine
and oak logs were made into rafts and floated
down river to Montreal and Quebec City and
then shipped to Great Britain.

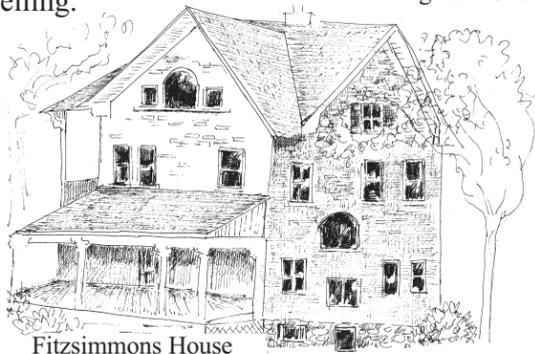
The Rockport Walking Tour

*Before we begin, we would ask
that you respect private property as
you proceed on this tour...*

We will begin the main walking tour at
the west gate off the parkway, which is
the primary entrance into Rockport.
Immediately on your left, south of
the gate is the Church of the
Redeemer Anglican
Church built in 1896. It is
believed that local boat
builders completed the
interior of the church as it
has the look of a ship's hull
with its narrow tongue and
groove pine and ribs on the
ceiling.



Church of the Redeemer
Anglican Church



Fitzsimmons House

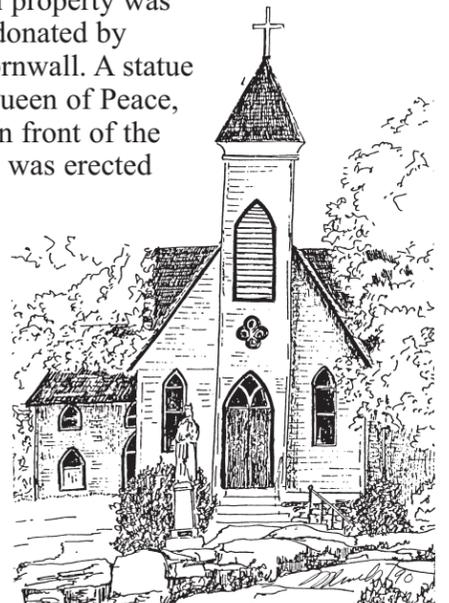
On the right is the Fitzsimmons house. Built
by the Plunkett family it is the only brick
house in the vicinity. It is of the Romanesque
Revival (turn of century) with interesting
brick patterns over the windows and the
window configuration itself is worth noting.
Note also the outbuildings, especially the long
row of adjoining sheds once used to shelter
horses and wagons at the St. Brendan's
Church. This lovely house was purchased in
1934 by the Fitzsimmons family at an estate
auction.

As you walk down the hill on the right, you
will see the back of St.
Brendan's Catholic Church,
built in 1891. Overlooking the
St. Lawrence from a high rock,
the church is named for the 6th
century monk, St. Brendan,
who is the patron saint of
seafaring people. On a Sunday
in June, each year, boats gather
in front of St. Brendan's for a
"Blessing of the Boats" by the
parish priest. See the interior of
the church with its stained glass
windows donated by the original
families of the parish that helped build the
church.

The church property was
originally donated by
Charles Cornwall. A statue of
Mary, Queen of Peace,
is located in front of the
church and was erected
in 1919 by

Louise
Cornwall
in
memory
of
Charles
and Mary
Cornwall.

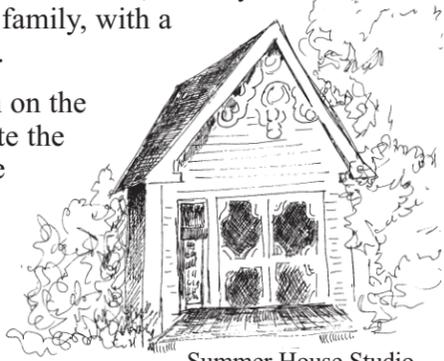
An
outdoor
"Stations
of the
Cross" is located
behind the church.



St. Brendan's Catholic
Church

As you return to Front Street, on the left is an interesting house - No. 8, built by the Carnegie family, with a unique tower.

Farther down on the same side note the pretty cottage Summer House and Studio and the cottage across from it, the McNeil House - No.11, now a Bed and Breakfast.



Summer House Studio

On your left, you will see the Rockport Boat Line parking lot. This is also the former site of Hickory Lodge. The lodge was an original Carnegie homestead built in the 1860s that grew into a famous resort. The lodge opened around 1894 and over the years it grew into a 22 room establishment with large dining room, and eventually in the late 1940's a beverage room. It was run by the



The former Hickory Lodge

Frank Fitzsimmons family. Frank Fitzsimmons was a prominent businessman of Rockport and also the Customs officer for 25 years.. The lodge was destroyed in a mysterious fire in 1951.

To your right, pass through an old roadway in front of the Boathouse Tavern once the home of Louise Cornwall and eventually becoming the Cornwall Boarding House. The Cornwall store (1857) now Boathouse Restaurant was, in the early 1800's, the sight of a log trading post. There was, originally, a storehouse extending over the veranda area and below there was a large enclosed boathouse. The false front was added in 1901. The post office was at the Cornwall store from 1874 to 1907. A large barn stood behind the store for cattle. The cattle would graze in Cornwall's Grove west of St. Brendan's Catholic Church. Just before his death, in 1907, Charles married again. Charles' second wife, Louise Cornwall, ran the store and boarding house until 1936. Nearby at the dock, stood a popular dance hall with customs office.

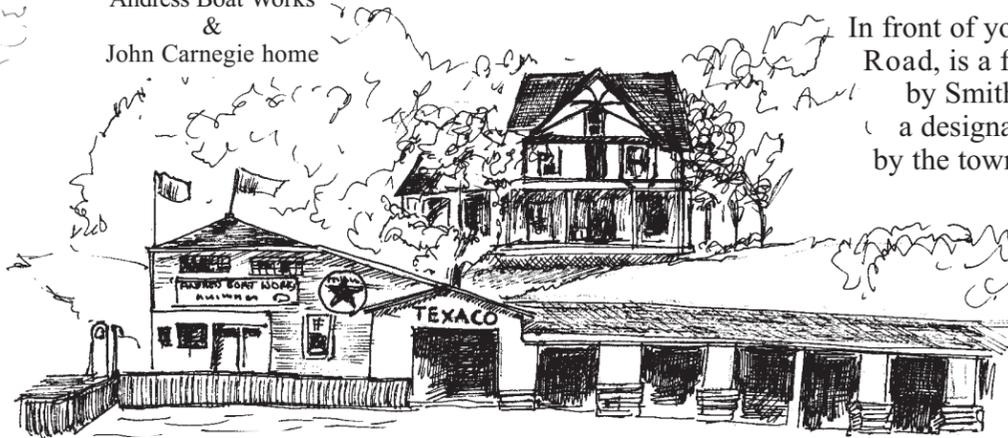


The Boathouse Restaurant

Continuing east along Front St., you will see the Ship's Galley Restaurant, once the location of a large hotel, Island View, built in 1880 by Theodore Lear. A popular hotel, it could accommodate 100 guests with dancing, amateur shows, travelling vaudeville shows and community suppers. The Island View was torn down 1936. (Apparently there was an earlier hotel in 1840 on this site, run by the Cornwall family).

Further along , on your left, you will discover the Rockport General Store built in 1905 by Abel Root. Note the false front façade. This store like the Cornwall Store maintained accounts for the local people. The General Store was crucial to a community with little outside contact; a river community. The customs office, at one time, was located on the upper floor.

Address Boat Works & John Carnegie home



Further on, on the river side of the road, you will see Address Boatworks operated since 1921 by the Address family. The boatworks was started in the early 1920s by Ed Address, who continued building boats here for over 60 years. Ed was proud to say that he built a boat in every one of those 60 years....tour boats, runabouts and St. Lawrence skiffs.



The General Store

Today, the boatworks is also a busy dive centre.

Just above Address Boatworks, is the Ed Address house built by John Carnegie in the 1890's. A lovely

example of the vernacular architecture of the Thousand Islands.

Front Street, 50 years ago had many more houses, a blacksmith shop a boat livery and a customs building.

Continue up the big hill and enjoy the great view. There is an interesting rock cut on your left as you walk along. This is Rockport granite, Precambrian, the oldest rock in the world, exposed in the Thousand Islands as part of the Frontenac Arch, an ancient mountain range scraped clean by glaciers 10,000 years ago. Geologically the Frontenac Arch joins the Algonquin region of Ontario with the Adirondacks in New York state.

To learn more about the Frontenac Arch and the Biosphere Reserve in this area, go to <http://www.fabr.ca>

To your right is Howard's Marine a family run marina and down further Ed Huck Marina . This large marina was begun by Fred Huck in 1895. Fred built boats but also engines which are still found in some old boats on the river today. In the 1940s Cassie Huck(Ed's wife) opened Scenic Lodge with 10 cabins. Today Scenic View Lodge is a private home surrounded by a bustling marina.

Continue up Burtches Lane, if you wish, and cross the Scenic Thousand Islands Parkway, a "make work" project of the 1930s. Continue on to the Old River Road once known as the Rockport Road. This scenic Heritage Byway was a footpath during the War of 1812 that led travellers to Billa Larue's Grist Mill, a few miles to the east (see plaque at Larue Cemetery at Larue Mills).

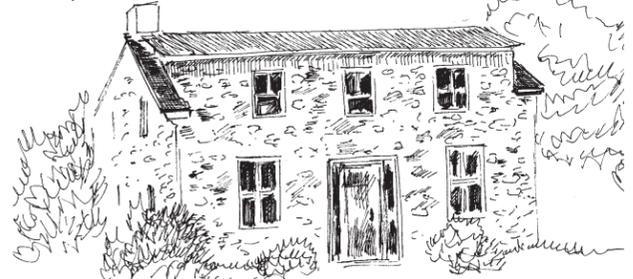
In front of you, at No. 28 Old River Road, is a fine granite cottage built by Smith Seaman in 1857. This is a designated property recognized by the township in 1996.

All of lot 23, some 200 acres, was originally granted to Caleb Seaman in 1790. Seaman was a United Empire Loyalist from Long Island New York. (The Loyalists

fled the Thirteen Colonies for British territory north of the St. Lawrence River.)



Seaman House's original roof line



Seaman House

A blacksmith shop once stood in front of this stone cottage. The Seamans were also timber merchants and like many other landowners in the area logged large oak and pine trees on their property. These logs were sent downriver in rafts to be shipped from Quebec City to Great Britain.

At this point you can make a circuit back to your starting point by turning west and walking through the north end of the village.

You will pass the site of the old Methodist Church - No. 24 (now a private dwelling); the Recreation Hall (built as a school in 1926) past the Rockport Protestant Cemetery (on Selton Road) the Hunt Cemetery and south to St. Brendan's Catholic Cemetery fronting on the Parkway.

Note the bike path running parallel to the Parkway from the west end of Brockville to Gananoque. Continue down through the Rockport gates to your starting point.

Stop for lunch or a drink in Rockport before continuing your journey. Whether going east or west you will find other heritage treasures nearby.

For those who want to explore more of the Rockport area past, follow the Heritage Byway Tour on the Old River Road (north of Rockport)

